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SECRETARY OF STATE AL JAEGER LAUNCHES WEB-BASED TOOL FOR BUSINESSES

Bismarck, ND – Secretary of State Al Jaeger announced today that his office has deployed a web-based tool that makes filing business annual reports with his office easier and more convenient.

Available on the Secretary of State's web site, www.state.nd.us/sec, the service allows out-of-state business corporations to access their annual reports with pre-populated data from the Secretary of State's corporate database.

"This exciting tool allows customers to access their reports with the required information already filled out," said Jaeger. "This will make the process of filing annual reports easier and will reduce filing errors."

The web-based service will first be available to out-of-state business corporations whose annual reports are due on May 15, and will be expanded to include in-state business corporations and other business entities filing during the remainder of 2002 and the beginning of 2003. The web-based application gives customers the option to complete the form on-line, print it, and sign it for delivery by mail or in person.

The next phase of development, to begin in the spring of 2003, will allow customers to complete their reports on-line and file them and pay electronically. To complete this phase, Jaeger anticipates law changes to be made during the upcoming session of the legislature, beginning in January 2003, which will eliminate the requirement that annual business reports be filed with a physical signature.

"The technology we have announced today demonstrates that the Secretary of State's office is moving ahead with technology solutions that will directly impact our customers," said Jaeger. "It is an exciting step towards e-commerce and making the process of doing business with the state easier and more customer friendly."

Jaeger credits the state's Information Technology Department (ITD) for providing the technical expertise and support for the project.

"ITD has been instrumental in getting this off-the-ground. They are a valuable partner," said Jaeger. "We will be counting on ITD as we move forward towards the next phase of development."

The service is an expansion of the Secretary of State's live Business Entity Search deployed in June 2001. The live search allows the public to search business records on-line in real time.

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"Already, the service has proved to be significant for North Dakota businesses, lawyers, law firms, and anyone interested in starting a new business, or researching existing businesses," said Jaeger.

Prior to launching the service the Secretary of State's office received numerous calls each day for information about the status of corporations, partnerships, trade names, the names of registered agents, along with other related information. One of the main reasons the search has become so valuable to users is because it is live, a feature not available in many states. This means the information provided on the website matches, to the minute, the status of a business record, as it exists in the Secretary of State's database.

To access all active business records, or any record inactivated within the past twelve months, searchers only need the first few words of a business name, a significant word in the business name, or the ID number assigned to that record by the Secretary of State's office.

The Business Entity Search is averaging over 47,000 web hits per month.

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